

# ARMY TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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## Introduction

The Army Tuition Assistance Program (ATAP) began modestly in the early 1990s and continues today as a dynamic and flexible funding vehicle for tuition assistance. The ATAP was established to assist acquisition workforce members in attaining their business credit hours and undergraduate and master's degrees.

Initially slated to expire in FY00, the program was extended through FY05. Since its inception, the program has remained consistently popular, reaching its peak in FY01 when new requirements in certain career fields prompted a significant increase in tuition assistance requests. This increase resulted in depletion of ATAP funding by the end of the third quarter. As such, efforts are now underway to re-evaluate the method of distributing ATAP funds. All current and prospective ATAP participants are encouraged to become familiar with ATAP policies and procedures, particularly in view of newly announced requirements.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for the ATAP, an applicant must be a member of the acquisition workforce and currently occupy a recognized acquisition position. To be considered for master's degree funding, an applicant must be Corps Eligible, Level III certified, or an Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) member.

## Requirements

It is important to note that yearly funding caps have been established for all ATAP participants. Participants seeking undergraduate degrees are limited to a \$5,000 yearly funding cap, and participants seeking master's degrees are limited to a \$7,500 yearly funding cap. Additionally, final course grades must be submitted within 60 days of course completion. Failure to submit grades could result in the loss of an individual's ability to obtain future ATAP funding. An approved *Request, Authorization, Agreement, Certification of Training and Reimbursement* (DD Form 1556) must be submitted to the National Capital Region

Customer Support Office (NCR CSO) 30 days prior to course start for fund cites. Finally, any requested curriculum or funding changes must be coordinated through the NCR CSO.

## Participant Selection

Beginning in FY02, ATAP applicants will no longer be accepted into the program on a first-come, first-served basis. Instead, an ATAP Competitive Selection Board comprised of AAC members from various regions will select participants. Board members will be chosen by the Director of the Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO) and will develop a Relative Standing List (RSL) for all applicants. Selections from the RSL will continue to be made until all ATAP funds are allocated. Once the board selects a workforce member for the ATAP, that individual is considered a participant for the entire degree program. Participants do not need to reapply each semester. If an applicant is not selected, he or she is free to reapply to the next board.

## Applying

The ATAP Competitive Selection Board will meet three times annually—in October, February, and June—for school start dates in January, June, and September, respectively. A call for applications will be solicited via an open announcement on the AAC home page at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil> and in *Army AL&T* magazine. Additionally, Acquisition Career Managers (ACMs) and the NCR CSO ATAP Coordinator may be contacted for ATAP application information. The application form, which is also on the AAC home page (click on **Forms**), is due no later than 30 days prior to the convening of the board for which the applicant wishes to be considered.

It is essential for applicants to plan early. It takes time to meet with prospective colleges, plan a curriculum, be accepted by the college of choice, and coordinate other documentation.

Applications must be mailed or hand delivered; faxed or electronically submitted applications will not be accepted. The

following documentation is required with all applications:

- Individual Development Plan (IDP) with entire curriculum individually entered and approved,
- Acquisition Career Record Brief (ACRB),
- Senior Rater Potential Evaluation (SRPE) (GS-13s and above or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level),
- Acceptance letter from college or university, and
- Institution's Web site address for accreditation information.

## Other Information

Why is it necessary to list an entire curriculum when class offerings are unknown, and why on the IDP? The simple answer is that the board approves curricula based on its validity to acquisition functions. The IDP allows the NCR CSO to track and approve course selections and changes electronically, thus reducing paperwork. It is important for courses to be listed in the fiscal year of the first day of the start of the course. Additionally, adding courses to a participant's IDP will result in required continuous learning points.

Applicants must ensure that their ACRB is accurate. The ACRB can be downloaded from the AAC home page and printed. An updated and signed ACRB, with pen and ink changes incorporated, is then forwarded to the ACM in the region that services the applicant's organization.

The SRPE is a document used by an applicant's senior rater to identify an applicant's potential ability and is required by all applicants GS-13 and above (or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level).

## Summary

The intent of the ATAP is to assist individuals in achieving their career goals while helping the Army maintain a highly proficient acquisition workforce. The ACMO Director encourages all workforce employees to take advantage of this valuable tuition assistance resource.

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